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ABSTRACT

Business communications, a career field tangential to that of journalism, was shown in a major research survey during 1975 to be an attractive, alternative profession for journalism majors. A questionnaire mailed to the membership of the International Association of Business Communicators contained 261 items, including demographies; questions on salaries, promotions, staff size, job satisfaction, and the types of media the communicators help produce; a section on concern about the national economic situation: items on media use; and a section on career preparedness. Resulting data show that journalism schools provide the necessary training for their graduates to excel in business communications, that the field of business communications offers attractive salaries over a wide range of industry types, and that its practitioners are generally well satisfied and secure in their jobs. Nine tables of findings are included. (JM)

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CASE FOR AN EMPHASIS IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS: FINDINGS FROM PROFILE/75

by

Gerald C. Stone

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Case for an Emphasis in Business Communications: Findings from Profile/75

It is no secret that journalism enrollments have increased on a national scale, and that the prospects for employment directly into the newspaper and television field have never been lower.[1] Recognizing this matter glut, journalism school administrators have begun screening applicants more carefully than in the past and have been limiting enrollment in journalism core courses to qualified junior-level undergraduates.[2] Yet with lower enrollments in most other liberal arts sequences, there is more pressure on journalism schools to keep the door open to as many students as possible.[3]

Training students for jobs which are scare at best is an anathema in a traditionally practical field such as journalism. Rather than accept the existing market crunch in newspaper-television, administrators have sought to emphasize programs which may broaden the career fields open to journalism graduates. The ideal solution is to develop new emphases within the existing framework--using facilities and courses already available at most universities--to open career fields now considered only tangential to the more traditional newspaper and television journalism profession.

A major research project, the International Association of Business Communicators' Profile/75 survey, shows that an

attractive tangential field does exist, that journalism graduates are drawn to it naturally, and that most schools of journalism could capitalize on existing courses by emphasizing business communications or even developing a sequence in the field. The findings of Profile/75 can be used to describe business communicators and to show that the profession is an attractive career field for journalism graduates.

Methodology

The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), was founded in 1969 as the umbrella organization for a host of local and regional chapters of business communications specialists across the United States and Canada. Its membership approaches 3,000 persons in almost as many corporations, associations or institutions; and its executive officers estimate the field includes another 10,000 positions not associated with the organization.[4]

To measure the success of its programs and to chart trends among its members, the IABC has commissioned several surveys, but never one so all-encompassing as the current Profile/75. The questionnaire was designed by the Communications Research Center at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, with input by IABC executives.

The final form consisted of a printed 12-page booklet which was mailed to the organization's entire membership and

was completed by 1,250 communicators for a return rate of 43%. There were 261 items of information including demographics; questions on salaries, promotions, staff size, job satisfaction and the types of media the communicators helped produce; a section on concern about the national economic situation; items on media use; and, a description of the primary publication the communicators produce. The form also contained a section on career preparedness which provides most of the data on who these business communicators are and what brings them into the field.

TABLE 1: Demogrpahic and Educational Characteristics of Business Communicators

Mean age.....	35	Per cent with "editorial" titles.....	43%
Per cent male.....	54%	Per cent with "public relations" titles.....	36%
Per cent having minimum bachelor's degree.....	82%	Per cent in a "public relations" department.....	54%
Per cent journalism majors.....	44%		
Mean per cent of time devoted to media communication	79%		

Demographic information shows the average business communicator is a male, age 35. Eighty-two per cent of survey respondents have at least a bachelor's degree and of

these, journalism is the single largest category of majors. The average per cent of time spent on media communications is 79%, and though more communicators are "editors" than have "public relations" titles, the majority of them are located in a public relations department. If business communicators are not industry's publicists, they do contribute significantly to supporting staffs of America's industrial public relations.

Journalism vs. Non-Journalism Major

Dividing the responding business communicators with degrees into journalism and non-journalism majors, Table 2 presents differences between these two groups and shows that journalism majors hold their own with graduates from all other fields in spite of the fact that a majority of them are paid primarily for communications skills duties rather than communications management or other administrative duties.

Evidence of what the business communicators themselves consider important credentials for the field is presented in Table 3 which gives mean rankings of responses when participants were asked to choose among six possible reasons for hiring business communicators for the organization's staff. The table shows that all respondents with degrees would hire staff members based on the individual's background and training as they ranked items from most important ("1") to least

TABLE 2: Journalism Majors Contrasted With Business Communicators Who Majored in Other Curricula.

	Journalism Majors (n=403)	Other Majors (n=457)
Approximate mean annual salary	$15,535	$15,685
Mean per cent last year raise	12.4	12.0
Years in business communication	6.9	7.2
Years with present organization	5.4	6.0
Mean organization size	15,728	14,954
Mean steps between self and organization's top person	2.0	1.8
Mean number of media communicator helps produce	11.1	10.8
Mean "innovator"[5] scale rating*	4.8	4.5
Mean professional seminars, workshops or conferences attended in the past year	2.5	2.6
Position satisfaction rating[6]	2.3	2.3
Promotion qualification rating[6]	2.3	2.4
Per cent paid primarily for duties in communications skills**	56%	38%
Per cent with direct access to boss	45%	55%

*$p < .01$

**$p < .001$

[5]The "innovator" scale is a seven-point scale which distinguishes between active and passive business communicators. A rating of "7" is the maximum active communicator.

[6]Satisfaction and promotion qualification scales range from one to five, with "1" as the maximum rating.

important ("6"). There is a definite hierarchy of priorities in the rankings. Journalism skills and experience is the first priority for both groups, though the journalism majors give it the highest priority; personality and willingness is second, though the journalists give this a lower priority; and in the rest of the list, both groups seem in total agreement.

TABLE 3: Mean Ranking Pattern of Values Sought in Hiring Business Communicators, Where "1" is most important.

	Journalism Majors	All Other Graduates
Journalism skills, experience	1.3	1.5
Personality and willingness	2.5	2.2
Business experience	3.5	3.5
Formal education	3.6	3.7
References	4.8	4.8
Affirmative action	5.3	5.2

Pearson correlation coefficient for the two rankings is +.99 indicating that the groups have ranked the attributes almost exactly alike. With six degrees of freedom, $p < .001$.

The thrust of the survey in career charting was to plot the sequence of events which led the communicators from college to their present occupation, and to note their level of satisfaction with their jobs.

Does anyone actually come immediately out of high school with a burning desire to produce company publications? As anticipated, few business communicators (25%) said their present career was what they had wanted even while in college. Only 36% of the journalism majors said they had wanted this kind of career compared with a similar 16% of all other respondents. Though a larger proportion of the journalists were thinking about business communications careers than non-journalists, the difference loses value considering that journalism is among the most opportune preparation subjects for the field. The small percentage of persons who were considering business communications careers in college--but who still ended up in the field--indicates one of three possible problems: 1) business communications is not billed as as attractive career field; 2) little or no information is available to the college student on opportunities in the field; or 3) there are few collegiate programs structured toward business communications.

More insight into the trilogy of information problems associated with the profession is gained through the answers to the question, "What was your opinion of the field of public relations or business communications while in college"? Table 4 indicates a dichotomy of opinion among the two categories of collegians with the journalism majors outnumbering others in both high and low opinion of the field, but generally

being more informed than majors in other disciplines. The impressions of these collegians shows a lack of information about business communications rather than a blighted reputation, and indicates an information campaign by journalism schools could increase student interest.

TABLE 4: Opinion of the Field While in College for Journalism and Non-Journalism Majors.

	Journalism Majors	Other Majors
High or above average	50%	37%
Average opinion	21	25
Below average or low	16	9
No opinion, don't remember opinion	13	29

Chi-square is 41 with 5 df; $p < .001$

Perhaps the best presentation of career tracks leading to the business communicators' current position is that offered in Table 5. The table may be viewed as successive rungs in a career ladder from before the respondent's first job to his present satisfaction with his business communication position. Again, the contrast between journalism majors and other respondents is the most succinct method of handling the survey data.

TABLE 5: Career Steps by Education and Collegiate Major.

	Journalism Major	Other Major	Non-College
Per cent who said college did prepare for their job**	73%	57%	--
Mean working years between college and first full-time business communication job**	4.5	6.8	--
Percent whose prior occupation was communications associated (print, broadcast, public relations, advertising or trade publications**	54%	32%	34%
Percent who pursued business communications, rather than being pursued by the field**	51%	39%	22%
Percent considering their jobs a move up compared with other work they had done	75%	69%	74%
Percent who would leave the field for a good newspaper or TV reporting job	28%	34%	27%
Percent satisfied with their present position in the field	73%	74%	71%

** $p < .001$

Using the statistically significant differences found in Table 5, we may piece together a picture of how the business communicator comes to be. The journalism major is more likely to be working in a field closely associated with communications, but to leave the associated field early by

taking the initiative in pursuing a job in business communications. He feels his college training did prepare him for his communications duties. The non-journalism major is much like the business communicator who has no college degree. He feels less prepared in that neither his college training nor his prior business experience is closely related with his present duties. There is a wide difference in the amount of time between college and the first business communication job for college graduates without journalism degrees. Though the non-journalists take nearly two-and-a-half more years to get into the field, the majority of these individuals were pursued by business communications instead of seeking out such jobs themselves. Industry pursues the non-journalist while the journalist pursues industry.

Why does the journalist seek a position in business communications rather than staying in a closely associated media field? Perhaps the answer lies in the higher salaries to be earned in business communications.

Salary Differences

This analysis is presented as a description of what the average business communicator might expect to earn rather than an explanation of the insignificant differences between journalist and non-journalist salaries. However, the data do show factors which influence salaries in the field.

Salary ranges in business communications make the field attractive as nearly 67% of the survey respondents earn between $10,000 and $20,000 annually; almost half earn $15,000 or more; and, 20% are in the $20,000-and-over bracket. Though communicators were not asked their exact salary, narrow categories allowed discrete measurement and show the average respondent earns $15,647, a figure roughly estimated at $2,000 more than was earned when a previous survey was taken in 1972.

Table 6 shows the results of an analysis of variance procedure to determine significant differences among groups in the amount of annual salary earned. Found to influence income were age, sex, previous experience in business communications, profit versus non-profit status of the organization, marital status, the size of the organization, the communicator's primary responsibility and the number of years the communicator has been with the present organization. As the table only shows significant differences, those factors found less influential included race, the below-doctorate levels of education, the undergraduate major, community size and the geographic region of the country in which the communicator works. Though respondents in the Northeast and Pacific Coast had a higher income average, wages are normally higher in these regions so it cannot be assumed these communicator's have increased buying power.[7]

TABLE 6: Factors Influencing the Approximate Mean Income of Business Communicators

		APPROXIMATE MEAN INCOME
AGE**	under 27	$11,244
	27 to 33	14,421
	34 to 45	17,774
	46 to 55	19,169
	over 55	20,199
SEX**	Male	$18,088
	Female	12,710
MARITAL STATUS**	Married	$16,374
	Not Married	13,742
PRIMARY DUTIES**	Communications Management	$18,841
	Communications Skills Areas	13,971
PROFIT STATUS**	Profit	$14,644
	Non-profit	15,953
YEARS IN FIELD**	1 to 5	$13,022
	6 to 10	16,773
	over 10	20,992
YEARS WITH FIRM**	1 to 5	$13,959
	6 to 10	17,159
	over 10	20,142
SIZE OF FIRM*	under 1,000	$14,759
	1,000-3,000	13,495
	3,000-10,000	15,117
	10,000-25,000	16,419
	over 25,000	19,779

*$p < .01$

**$p < .001$

Further salary differences can be explored by using the information gained in Table 6. Though these seem to be the key factors which influence salary range, the chief question is: to what extent are these factors independent predictors of salary? Table 7 provides an analysis of the association between the key indicators and the communicator's salary.

TABLE 7: Degree of Association Between Salary and Other Pertinent Factors. As the Pearson Correlation Coefficient approaches "+1.0" salary increases are more dependent on increases in the other pertinent factors.

	DEGREE OF ASSOCIATION
Size of the organization**	+.30
Communicator's age**	+.46
Years in Business Communication**	+.52
Years with the present firm**	+.43
Marital status (Married-Single)**	+.18
Primary responsibility (management-skills areas)*	+.07
Sex (male-female)**	+.44
Profit vs. non-profit firm*	+.09

*$p < .01$

**$p < .001$

Multiple regression allows us to probe for which of these factors are relatively independent and powerful influences on the communicator's salary. The table seems to show that total years in business communications is a more important salary determinent than years with the present organization. Multiple regression bears out this implication and allows us to remove "years with the present organization" as an independently powerful influence. Age, however, is independent of the other factors and is to be retained. In order of their influence, when all of the factors are considered, those most relevant to salary are given in Table 8.

TABLE 8: Multiple Regression Analysis Predictors of Communicators Salaries.

	F RATIO	VARIANCE EXPLAINED
1. Sex, male rather than female	104.8	.182
2. Years in business communication	96.6	.158
3. Size of the organization	50.1	.082
4. Age of communicator	18.8	.031
5. Primary responsibility, having manager rather than skill duty	15.4	.025
PER CENT OF TOTAL SALARY VARIANCE EXPLAINED:		.478

Industry Types

Tabulations by industry types provide an opportunity to isolate each major product or service area and learn about its business communicator. Though the exact mean salary communicators receive in each industry type has been omitted, the industries in Table 9 have been grouped by the categories of salaries paid communicators.

The per cent of respondents in each industry group indicates business communicators are equally dispersed among the listed industry categories. Manufacturing, insurance, finance and utilities had a larger share of the respondents, but no group had more than 10% of the communicators. The table shows also that organization size alone has little relationship with salaries paid because some industry groups such as public relations and graphic arts-printing are tiny but highly specialized groups. Further evidence is found in the different communication staffs each industry group has: the relationship is between the kind of work being done rather than the gross numbers of employees an organization migh have.

Hiring of female communicators seems to hug traditional industry conceptions with "outdoors" industries such as metals-mining, electrical, aero, transportation and chemical having the least while graphic arts-printing, finance, pharmaceutical and retail sales have the most.

TABLE 9: Industries by Attributes of Communicators

	Automative	Chemical	Metals-mining	Petroleum	Pharmaceutical	Public Relations	Aero	Education	Electrical	Graphic Arts-Printing	Forest Products-Paper	Transportation	Utilities	Hospital-Medical	Manufacturing	Retail Sales	Construction-Engineering	Finance	Foods	Government	Insurance	Publishers	Associations
	(Over $18,000 Salary)						(Salaries $16,000-$18,000)							($14,500-$16,000)			(Salaries Below $14,500)						
Per cent of Respondent	2	2	2	5	2	1	2	3	2	1	2	1	9	4	10	3	1	8	6	3	9	1	3
Organization mean size (thousands)	33	27	21	17	8	1	13	17	41	3	18	24	14	5	13	45	5	7	11	12	10	14	16
Communications mean staff size	6	10	6	7	5	2	6	6	3	9	4	5	8	3	3	5	3	4	3	2	4	19	2
Per cent female	33	20	26	37	63	33	18	46	27	70	25	13	39	54	37	61	46	67	52	47	56	33	43
Per cent graduate degree holders	--	25	13	10	18	--	11	43	8	10	12	20	18	17	13	11	9	10	14	20	12	--	7
Mean years with organization	7	7	10	6	8	4	11	7	9	6	8	5	8	4	6	7	4	5	6	4	7	7	5
Mean per cent last year's raise	10	17	14	21	10	9	8	11	11	10	11	14	12	14	12	10	13	13	12	11	11	10	11
Per cent wanting to leave job	19	42	24	29	21	--	57	35	50	--	39	27	43	68	36	45	40	43	36	57	32	80	36

The per cent of communicators holding advanced college degrees is closely associated with industry type as those in education, chemical, transportation and governmental work are the most highly educated.

Those in the higher paying job categories have been with their organization longer, but it must be remembered that job tenure and salary are closely associated in either direction. Little information also is gained from the per cent of salary raise received during the past year because of the inequity of salaries paid, but the table does show that those in the upper income industry categories receive as much of a raise per cent (which is actually a larger dollar amount) as those in the lower paying categories. The petroleum field's average 21% raise in 1974 may be due in part to general price raises and significantly higher profits during that fuel shortage period, or it might reflect a tremendous boost in workload during the fuel crisis when much of the image changing requirement fell to that industry's business communicators.

The table does show general job satisfaction, and gives evidence that the decision to stay at one's job is highly dependent on salaries received. But this statement is misleadingly broad in that industries even within a single pay scale range have inordinate percentages of communicators wanting to stay or leave. The chemical industry is the only

in its pay range where more than 29% are displeased with their jobs, but only the publishers and government groups have more than 50% wanting to leave the jobs in the lowest industry pay scale groups.

Conclusions

Business communications is as much a primary public relations duty as a supportive element in American industry's public relations departments. The field offers attractive salaries over a wide range of industry types, and its practitioners are generally well satisfied and secure in their jobs.

The data show that journalism schools are providing the necessary training for their graduates to excell in business communications. But the schools could interest a greater per cent of their majors in this career by emphasizing it more, and could possibly make their graduates more viable in the field by structuring a program which adds the management dimension to an existing strong skills program.

In all, business communications is a tangential field that offers an alternative for journalism majors.

FOOTNOTES

[1]"The J-School Explosion," Time, Vol. 104, November 11, 1974, p. 101.

[2]Nanci Knopf Dawdy, "Freshman, Sophomore J-Courses Will Continue to be Important", Journalism Educator, January, 1975, pp. 9-12.

[3]Jan Schaffer, "The Great Journalism Rush", The Quill, April, 1974, pp. 13-16.

[4]International Association of Business Communicators Register, IABC, 1974, p. 1.

[5]see note

[6]see note

[7]U. S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1974. (95th edition) Washington, D.C., 1974, p. 380.